Providing transport to young people in rural areas to support access to positive activities

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Every Child Matters *In Lincolnshire*

Lincolnshire COUNTY COUNCIL

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Empowering Young People Projects - Background and Context

- The pilots are being run to test the hypothesis;

  '*Empowering individual disadvantaged young people to take part in positive activities of their choice through access to spending power increases their participation in such activities and contributes to educational engagement and other beneficial outcomes'.*

- Nine areas in England have been chosen to pilot the project, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire are the only rural ones.

- Young people taking part are aged 13-17, and in Public Care or eligible for free school meals.

- Young people are allocated monthly amounts of £25-£40 to access positive activities.

Background and context

- This initiative is part of the overall Government strategy to improve young people's life chances and their relations with the communities in which they live, through participation in positive activities and improved services.

- In Lincolnshire we run a 'people and paper' pilot whereas all the other pilot areas use variations of Smart cards.

- The activities can be limited to specific providers or young people could have a free choice – each pilot uses different criteria.

How it works in Lincolnshire

- Our pilot builds on partnerships between young people and their Key Workers.
- Young people can choose whatever they want to do.
- This is written down, signed by the Key Worker and passed to a central team who organise the booking and payment including arranging transport to and from the activity.
- Young people do not see any money!
- Young people from ‘urban’ areas receive a monthly entitlement of £25, those in ‘rural’ areas get £40 to help with transport costs and other rural deprivation issues.
- Activities have included driving lessons, karting, music lessons, paintballing, sports, arts and crafts and… tractor driving courses!

About Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire is the 4th largest county in England being 80 miles long and 30 wide. It measures 2,280 square miles. It has a population of 692,800 with around 65,000 11-18 year olds. Lincoln city has a population of 87,800 people.

It is a rural county with large areas given over to agriculture. Travelling distances and times can be deceptive, especially when stuck behind a caravan or tractor!

School Transport

Approx 23000 pupils and students are transported each day as follows:

- Taxis (4-8seats): 2568
- Mini/Midi bus (9-35 seats): 2553
- Tail Lift: 90
- Single/Double Deckers: 16953
- Train: 301
- Private Travel: 309

- Of the 23,000 only 25% travel on existing commercial services, 19% travel on ‘SchoolLincs’ services with 56% needing dedicated contracts for various reasons.

- For the Financial year 2007/8 the overall cost was £26.9 million, with £3.3 million of this spent on FE transport.

- Lincolnshire has 80% car ownership which is 7% higher than the national average.

Transport for young people outside school

- Buses – OK between the towns but poor or non-existent to smaller villages. Evening and Sunday buses are scarce.
- Mini bus – ‘Call Connect’ helps cover the rural areas but finishes at 7pm and doesn’t run on Sundays. ‘Dial-a-ride’ only operates 8.30am-5.30pm Monday to Friday.
- Trains – It requires a 2 hr journey via Sleaford and Boston to get from Lincoln to Skegness!
- Voluntary car scheme – Cheapest but availability is variable.
- Taxis – Can be very expensive A journey of 12 miles normally costs between £20-£30.
- Bicycle, moped, motorbike – Not many country roads have lights or even road markings.
- Relatives – Cost, and what if the relatives can’t drive?

Challenges

High demand for taxis due to

- No existing transport in the area
- Not possible to divert public transport in the area owing to time constraints or capacity
- Rural location, often no access for larger vehicles
- Medical reasons why buses cannot be used.

Buses are not popular because

- Young people frequently have to wait in remote areas for transport to arrive
- Timetables often not available at bus stops.

Trains are seldom used as

- Service is so limited and getting to a station can be difficult.

Conclusions

- Young people have told us that lack of transport is a major concern.
- For many young people it the biggest barrier to them taking part in positive activities
- Cost of private transport is prohibitive.
- Lack of local amenities means isolation and deprivation are real issues.
- Transport provision is a main priority for Lincolnshire Children's Services.
- Some activity providers are now providing transport themselves.
- Partnerships between private and public sector should be encouraged.
- More local activities should be provided.

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